

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 BONN 01389

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, GW

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE
KOHL

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN A WIDE RANGING DISCUSSION WITH EMBASSY
OFFICERS, CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE KOHL GAVE HIS
VIEWS ON A NUMBER OF TOPICS. HE FEELS THAT THE 1976
BUNDESTAG ELECTION IS AN "OPEN RACE" AND THE CDU/CSU
WILL MAKE A COALITION OFFER TO THE FDP IF THE UNION
PARTIES RECEIVE JUST UNDER OR JUST OVER FIFTY PERCENT OF
THE VOTE. HE EXPECTS STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC REFORM, FOREIGN
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POLICY, SOCIAL ISSUES, LAW AND ORDER AND EDUCATION TO BE

HIS ELECTION THEMES. IF THE CDU/CSU FAILS TO WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, HE DOES NOT EXPECT THE NEW SOCIAL/LIBERAL COALITION TO SURVIVE THE 1979 FRG PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. KOHL IS UNCERTAIN AS TO THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF A CDU/CSU VETO OF THE POLISH AGREEMENT IN THE BUNDESRAT. THE CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE BELIEVES THAT THE MOOD OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IN RECENT YEARS HAS CHANGED IN HIS FAVOR. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THE BUNDESTAG ELECTION KOHL WILL BE AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN NATIONAL POLITICS FOR SOME YEARS TO COME. THE EMBASSY THEREFORE REITERATES THE RECOMMENDATION THAT APPOINTMENTS BE ARRANGED WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY WHEN KOHL VISITS THE U.S. IN MAY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND AN EMBASSY OFFICER VISITED HELMUT KOHL ON JAN. 22. THE CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

2. THE 1976 BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS AND LOWER SAXONY

KOHL SAID HE FIRMLY BELIEVED THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION WAS "AN OPEN RACE." WHILE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN HANNOVER, IT ALREADY APPEARED THAT THE ELECTION OF ALBRECHT WOULD HELP THE CDU/CSU NEXT FALL. THE LATEST PUBLIC OPINION POLL INDICATED THAT 95 PERCENT OF THE GERMAN PUBLIC WAS AWARE OF ALBRECHT'S SURPRISE ELECTION. HE BELIEVED THERE WAS A SIX TO FOUR CHANCE THAT ALBRECHT WOULD BE ABLE TO FORM A MINORITY CDU GOVERNMENT. IF ALBRECHT DID SO, IT WAS LIKELY THAT HE WOULD PRESENT EXACTLY THE SAME BUDGET TO THE "LANDTAG" THAT HAD BEEN PREPARED BY THE SPD/FDP GOVERNMENT AND HAD ALREADY BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION IN THE "LANDTAG" COMMITTEES; IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, THEREFORE, FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND LIBERALS TO VOTE AGAINST THEIR OWN BUDGET.

3. ANOTHER FACTOR IN FAVOR OF THE CDU IN HANNOVER WAS THAT SCHOOL VACATIONS COME EARLY IN SAXONY. THE "LANDTAG" WOULD GO INTO RECESS SHORTLY AFTER THE BUDGET DEBATE. THEREFORE, IF ALBRECHT GOT HIS BUDGET THROUGH

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HE SHOULD HAVE NO FURTHER DIFFICULTIES BEFORE THE OCTOBER 3 FEDERAL ELECTIONS. KOHL DID NOT SAY HOW HE BELIEVED THE LOWER SAXONY DELEGATION WOULD VOTE IN THE BUNDESRAT ON THE POLISH AGREEMENT. HE DID, HOWEVER REMARK, THAT ALBRECHT WOULD BE FREE TO DECIDE FOR HIMSELF IF HE FORMED A MINORITY GOVERNMENT AND NOT A COALITION GOVERNMENT WITH THE FDP.

4. CDU ELECTION THEMES AND POST-ELECTION PLANS

WHEN ASKED WHAT THE MAIN CDU CAMPAIGN THEMES WOULD BE IN THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS, KOHL REPLIED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO SINGLE THEME, AT LEAST IN HIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN. AMONG THE ISSUES THAT WOULD BE CENTRAL DURING THE CAMPAIGN WERE: STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC REFORM, FOREIGN POLICY, SOCIAL ISSUES, LAW AND ORDER, AND EDUCATION.

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(COMMENT: IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT KOHL SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO "MY CAMPAIGN" AS IF TO POINT OUT THAT THE CSU MIGHT HAVE OTHER IDEAS. CSU OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT

THEY WOULD CONCENTRATE ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES.)

5. KOHL SAID IT WAS LIKELY THAT THE GERMAN ECONOMY WOULD SHOW IMPROVEMENT BEFORE THE ELECTION AND UNEMPLOYMENT MIGHT DECLINE TO APPROXIMATELY 800,000. THE PROBLEM, HE SAID, WAS NOT THE SHORT RUN, BUT THE MORE SERIOUS QUESTION OF COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC REFORMS NECESSARY OVER THE MEDIUM AND LONG RUN. IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS LARGE NUMBERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD BE ENTERING THE LABOR MARKET AND NEW JOBS WOULD
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HAVE TO BE FOUND FOR THEM. STRUCTURAL CHANGES WERE NECESSARY IN SUCH AREAS AS TEXTILES. INDUSTRY WOULD HAVE TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE INFLATION OF ENERGY PRICES AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO FACE UP TO THE GROWING COST OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS.

6. ACCORDING TO KOHL, UNLIKE THE 1972 ELECTION (WHICH BECAUSE OF A REDUCTION IN THE MINIMUM VOTING AGE TO 18 HAD REFLECTED AN ABNORMALLY HIGH PERCENT OF NEW VOTERS), THIS YEAR'S ELECTION WOULD BE DECIDED BY THE "OLD PEOPLE." NEVER BEFORE, KOHL SAID, WAS THERE SUCH A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF GERMAN VOTERS WHO WERE 65 YEARS OR OLDER. MANY OF THE OLD PEOPLE WERE PENSIONERS AND NOT REPRESENTED BY THE POWERFUL INTEREST GROUPS IN THE SOCIETY SUCH AS THE TRADE UNIONS. DESPITE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS MADE SINCE THE WAR, THERE WERE STILL SIX MILLION GERMANS (MOSTLY OLD) WHO FELL BELOW THE PROVERTY LINE. SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE TO HELP THESE PEOPLE.

7. FOREIGN POLICY, HE SAID, WAS ALSO LIKELY TO BE AN ISSUE. UNLIKE ADENAUER, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAD NOT ATTEMPTED TO INCLUDE THE OPPOSITION IN THE MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY, FOR EXAMPLE, HE SAID, ADENAUER HAD TAKEN REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL THE "FRAKTIONEN" TO MOSCOW WITH HIM AND THUS HAD FORCED THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, WHO WERE THEN IN OPPOSITION, TO TAKE JOINT RESPONSIBILITY WITH THE CDU GOVERNMENT FOR ADENAUER'S "OPENING TO THE EAST" POLICY. BRANDT AND SCHMIDT HAD NOT DONE ANYTHING SIMILAR. KOHL DID NOT, HOWEVER, ELABORATE ON THE CDU'S FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS IN THE CAMPAIGN. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT "LAW AND ORDER" - THE APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO COPE WITH POLITICAL TERRORISM AND THE RAISING CRIME RATE - WOULD BE AN ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN.

8. KOHL COMMENTED THAT GENSCHER HAD BEEN FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL AT THE FDP'S THREE KINGS DAY MEETING IN STUTTGART IN PLAYING DOWN THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE COALITION IN

BONN. GENSCHER HAD PORTRAYED THE FDP AS A LOYAL BUT
INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION WITHIN THE COALITION. HOWEVER,
THE EVENTS IN HANNOVER HAD ONCE AGAIN FORCED THE FDP
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INTO A CORNER ON THE COALITION QUESTION. IT WAS VERY
DIFFICULT FOR THE LIBERALS TO DENY THE CHARGE OF BEING
A "BLOCKPARTEI" IN LIGHT OF THEIR BEHAVIOR IN HANNOVER.

9. IF THE CDU/CSU WERE TO RECEIVE JUST OVER OR JUST
UNDER FIFTY PERCENT IN THE BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS, KOHL
SAID, HE WOULD MAKE AN OFFER TO THE FDP TO FORM A CDU/
FDP GOVERNMENT COALITION. IN THE LATTER CASE, KOHL
COMMENTED, HE DID NOT EXPECT THE FDP WOULD ACCEPT THE
CDU/CSU'S OFFER BUT A NEW FDP/SPD GOVERNMENT WOULD
PROBABLY NOT SURVIVE BEYOND THE FEDERAL PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION IN 1979. KOHL REMARKED THAT HE HAD THE
ADVANTAGE OVER MANY OF HIS POLITICAL RIVALS BECAUSE OF
HIS RELATIVE YOUTH. "REMEMBER", HE SAID, "I AM ONLY
45." HE MENTIONED THAT HE WAS TRYING TO GET SCHMIDT
TO AGREE TO A TV DEBATE BUT SCHMIDT REFUSED. "IF I WERE
IN HIS PLACE", HE SAID, "I WOULD DO THE SAME THING."

10. THE PRESENT MOOD IN GERMANY

KOHL STATED THAT THE MOOD IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
HAD CHANGED CONSIDERABLY IN THE LAST FEW YEARS. YOUNG
GERMANS OF HIGH SCHOOL AGE HAD A VALUE SYSTEM, HE SAID,
WHICH WAS MORE COMPARABLE TO THAT OF THEIR GREAT-GRAND
FATHERS THAN TO THAT OF THEIR FATHERS. THESE YOUNG
GERMANS WERE LOOKING FOR IDEALS AND WERE SOMEWHAT DIS-
ENCHANTED WITH PURE MATERIALISM. THERE WERE A NUMBER OF
INDICES, HE SAID, THAT POINTED TO A CHANGE OF THE SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL MOOD IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN YEARS, PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SHOWED THAT

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THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION VALUED PERSONAL FREEDOM ABOVE ECONOMIC SECURITY AND, UNLIKE ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO, A MAJORITY NOW SUPPORTS A FOREIGN POLICY BASED UPON THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE RATHER THAN A POLICY OF NEUTRALISM.

11. IN THE 1971 RHINELAND-PALATINATE "LANDTAG" ELECTIONS THE PRESENCE OF AMERICAN TROOPS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC WAS AN ISSUE. HIS OPPONENT, HE SAID, HAD MADE A PUBLIC GESTURE OUT OF REFUSING AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A PUBLIC AMERICAN MILITARY CEREMONY IN THE HOPE OF PICKING UP VOTES. KOHL HAD NEVER PLAYED THIS KIND OF POLITICS. WITH VIET NAM NO LONGER AN ISSUE AND WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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A CHANGE IN THE GENERAL ATTITUDE IN THE FRG, ANTI-AMERICANISM OR EVEN CRITICISM OF THE U.S. HAD PLAYED NO ROLE IN THE 1975 R-P "LANDTAG" ELECTION. KOHL REMARKED SARCASTICALLY THAT SPD DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER WAS NOW DELIGHTED TO HAVE HIS PICTURE TAKEN WITH AMERICAN GENERALS. KOHL SAID THAT FOR HIS GENERATION, WHICH GREW UP IN THE POST WAR ERA, THE TIES TO THE U.S.

WERE EXTREMELY STRONG. HE COMMENTED THAT WHEN HE FIRST MET HIS WIFE AT "DANCE SCHOOL" HE HAD BEEN WEARING A SUIT THAT HIS FAMILY HAD RECEIVED IN A CARE PACKAGE. HE WOULD NEVER FORGET SUCH AMERICAN GENEROSITY.

12. POLISH AGREEMENTS

KOHL DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF AS TO WHETHER OR NOT HE THOUGHT THE POLISH PENSION AGREEMENT WOULD BE APPROVED BY THE BUNDESRAT. HE ALSO OBSERVED THAT IT WAS NOW DIFFICULT TO FORETELL WHETHER A CDU/CSU VETO IN THE BUNDESRAT WOULD HURT OR HELP HIM IN THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION. HE SAID THERE WERE A NUMBER OF GENUINE DIFFICULTIES IN THE POLISH AGREEMENTS AS A WHOLE. THOSE DIFFICULTIES CENTERED NOT ON THE FINANCES OF THE AGREEMENTS BUT ON THE STYLE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AND, FOR EXAMPLE, ON SUCH COMPLEX QUESTIONS AS THE NUMBER OF GERMANS IN POLAND WHO MIGHT WISH TO EMIGRATE. THE CDU WAS WORRIED THAT THE AGREEMENTS AS DRAFTED CREATED TWO CLASSES OF GERMANS IN POLAND: THOSE WHO COULD AND THOSE WHO COULD NOT EMIGRATE. HOWEVER, HE OBSERVED, LATEST GERMAN RED CROSS REPORTS SHOWED THAT THERE MAY BE CONSIDERABLY FEWER GERMANS INTERESTED IN EMIGRATING THAN HAD INITIALLY BEEN BELIEVED. IF IT WERE TO TURN OUT THAT THE NUMBER OF POTENTIAL EMIGRANTS WAS CLOSE TO THE 120,000 THAT THE POLES HAD AGREED TO LET OUT, THE AGREEMENTS MIGHT APPEAR IN A DIFFERENT (PRESUMABLY MORE POSITIVE) LIGHT THAN THEY HAD IN THE PAST.

13. "OSTPOLITIK" IN GENERAL

KOHL SAID THAT IT WOULD BE ESSENTIAL FOR ANY GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC TO PURSUE A POLICY OF ACCOMMODATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION. THE PROBLEM WAS TO CONFIDENTIAL

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DO IT IN A MANNER THAT WOULD NOT JEOPARDIZE GERMAN INTERESTS. HE SAID THAT THE SPD HAD OFTEN NEGOTIATED UNDER SELF-IMPOSED TIME PRESSURES (LIKE SCHMIDT'S POLISH NEGOTIATIONS IN HELSINKI) WHEN MORE COULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED AT A MORE LEISURELY PACE.

KOHL SAID THAT DURING HIS MOSCOW TRIP HE HAD FOUND THE RUSSIANS VERY INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS. HE BELIEVED THE RUSSIANS UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY COULD WORK WITH HIM IF HE WERE TO BECOME CHANCELLOR. IN FACT, HE BELIEVED THAT THEY WOULD BE QUITE PREPARED TO WORK EVEN WITH STRAUSS IF THAT WERE NECESSARY.

14. KOHL'S PLANNED VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

KOHL CONFIRMED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT THE U.S. FROM MAY 1 TO MAY 6. UNFORTUNATELY, HE WILL ONLY HAVE TIME TO VISIT WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK. HE HAD MET WITH DAVID ROCKEFELLER IN GERMANY LAST DECEMBER, AND HE HOPED TO VISIT HIM IN NEW YORK. HE STRESSED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO CALL ON THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY AS WELL AS OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. HE RECALLED HIS EARLIER MEETING WITH COUNSELOR SONNENFELDT. HE REMARKED THAT IN 1973, AFTER HE HAD COME OUT OF HIS MEETING WITH THEN VICE PRESIDENT FORD, HE HAD TOLD THE GERMAN REPORTERS ACCOMPANYING HIM THAT FORD WOULD BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. THE REPORTERS MADE FUN OF HIS PREDICTION BUT HE HAD TURNED OUT TO BE RIGHT.

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15. THE U.S. ROLE IN THE GERMAN ELECTIONS

KOHL SAID HE HOPED THAT THE U.S. WOULD MAKE AN EFFORT TO PROVIDE AN IMAGE OF NEUTRALITY IN THE UPCOMING GERMAN ELECTIONS. HE OBSERVED THAT IN 1972, ESPECIALLY DURING THE EUPHORIA OF DETENTE, THE U.S. OFTEN APPEARED TO MANY OF HIS ASSOCIATES TO BE SUPPORTING THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. THIS HAD BEEN A DISAPPOINTMENT TO MANY MEMBERS OF THE CDU/CSU WHO BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE MORE GENUINE FRIENDS OF THE U.S. THAN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE SPD/FDP COALITION GOVERNMENT WOULD DO WHAT IT COULD TO MAKE IT APPEAR THAT THE U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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FAVORED SCHMIDT'S REELECTION, AND HE HOPED THE U.S. WOULD NOT LET ITSELF BE TRAPPED BY THAT TACTIC.

16. THE CANDIDATE LOOKS AT HIMSELF

WHEN ASKED WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE FILM DEVOTED TO HIM THAT HAD APPEARED ON TV THE EVENING BEFORE, KOHL REPLIED THAT HE AND HIS STAFF HAD MIXED OPINIONS. HE MENTIONED THAT IT WAS A PECULIAR FEELING TO BE THE SUBJECT OF SUCH SCRUTINY. KONRAD ADENAUER HAD TOLD HIM ONCE THE GREATEST DANGER TO A PUBLIC FIGURE WAS THAT HE MIGHT LOSE HIS OWN SENSE OF PRIVATE IDENTITY. THE KEY, KOHL SAID, WAS TO REMEMBER POPE JOHN'S WORDS: "JOHN, DON'T TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY." IT WAS IMPORTANT TO BE ABLE TO LAUGH AT ONESELF.

17. ANOTHER PARTICULAR PROBLEM FOR PEOPLE IN A POSITION OF RESPONSIBILITY WAS THE DIFFICULTY IN ENSURING THAT ONE'S ADVISORS GAVE HONEST AND FRANK ADVICE EVEN WHEN THEY KNEW IT MIGHT NOT BE WHAT THE BOSS WOULD LIKE TO HEAR. KOHL COMMENTED THAT HE RECENTLY HAD BEEN LOOKING AT GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES NOW BEING RELEASED AFTER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. AMONG THE DOCUMENTS WERE GESTAPO REPORTS ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES IN THE RHINELAND-PALATINATE DURING THE NAZI PERIOD. THE REPORTS AT THE LOWER LEVELS WERE SURPRISINGLY FRANK AND ACCURATE ABOUT PUBLIC ANTI-NAZI ATTITUDES BUT, HE SAID, THE INFORMATION NEVER GOT ABOVE A CERTAIN LEVEL BECAUSE THOSE RESPONSIBLE WERE AFRAID TO PASS ON BAD NEWS TO THEIR MASTERS. ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THIS PHENOMENON, KOHL SAID, WERE THE "FAUX PAS" BREZHNEV COMMITTED DURING HIS VISIT TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IN 1973.

18. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS AND EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF AGENTS IN THE FRG, BREZHNEV HAD NOT BEEN FULLY INFORMED ABOUT THE WEST GERMAN POLITICAL SITUATION. AS A RESULT, HE INSULTED THE GERMAN PUBLIC BY STAYING AT THE PETERSBERG WHICH IN THE GERMAN MIND WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ALLIED HIGH COMMISSION AND THE BIRTH OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. LATER, WHEN MAKING THE TOAST AT THE STATE DINNER, BREZHNEV
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REFERRED TO THE SPD GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PRESENT AS "LIEBE GENOSSEN UND GENOSSINNEN" WHICH OF COURSE WAS A POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT TO HIS HOSTS.

19. KOHL THEN TURNED TO A DISCUSSION OF THE PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WHICH COULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE OCTOBER 3 FEDERAL ELECTIONS. KOHL SAID THAT HE WAS VERY SATISFIED WITH HIS PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS. IN A TRADITIONAL GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION POLL ASKING WHETHER RESPONDENTS HAVE A GOOD OPINION OR A BAD OPINION OF VARIOUS POLITICAL FIGURES, ONLY FIVE OTHER POLITICIANS THAN KOHL HAD SCORED 65 PERCENT OR MORE POSITIVE RATING. THE OTHER FIVE, ADENAUER, ERHARD, BRANDT, SCHEEL AND SCHMIDT HAD EITHER OCCUPIED OR WERE OCCUPYING THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT OR CHANCELLOR.

20. KOHL THEN PICKED UP A COPY OF THE LATEST PUBLIC OPINION POLL COMPARING THE DIFFERENT PERSONAL QUALITIES OF HIMSELF AND SCHMIDT. WITH A CHUCKLE, HE REMARKED THAT ONE HAD TO LOOK AT THESE POLLS AS IF THEY WERE ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE, LEST IT BE IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE A USEFUL ASSESSMENT.

21. THEN, WITH CONSIDERABLE CANDOR, HE WENT DOWN THE LIST POINTING OUT WHERE HE THOUGHT HIS STRONG POINTS WERE AND WHERE HE THOUGHT HIS IMPORTANT WEAKNESSES WERE IN COMPARISON WITH SCHMIDT. TWO AREAS IN WHICH SCHMIDT APPEARED MUCH STRONGER, AND WHICH KOHL FELT WERE POLITICALLY IMPORTANT, WERE: DECISIVENESS (41 PERCENT TO

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23 PERCENT) AND LEADERSHIP (36 PERCENT TO 16 PERCENT).
ON THE OTHER HAND, KOHL POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS A
POLITICAL ADVANTAGE THAT MORE PEOPLE REGARDED HIM RATHER
THAN THE CHANCELLOR AS FAIR AND HONORABLE. THE MOOD
IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC WAS MOVING "TO THE MIDDLE"
RATHER THAN TO THE LEFT OR TO THE RIGHT, KOHL SAID. IT
WAS HIS GOOD POLITICAL FORTUNE THAT THE PRESENT "ZEIT-
GEIST" FAVORED HIS TYPE.

22. THE SETTING

KOHL WAS VERY RELAXED DURING THE MEETING AND WHAT
HAD BEEN SCHEDULED AS A HALF-HOUR COURTESY CALL TURNED
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INTO A WIDE-RANGING HOUR AND A HALF DISCUSSION. HE

MENTIONED THAT HE HAD A "NON-POLITICAL" WEEKEND AHEAD AND THAT IT LOOKED AS IF IT WOULD BE THE MOST RELAXING WEEKEND IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. HIS "NON-POLITICAL" WEEKEND INCLUDED PRESENTING THE "ATHLETE-OF-THE-YEAR AWARD" TO A GERMAN WRESTLER, A MEETING WITH FRIENDS TO DISCUSS ELECTION CAMPAIGN STRATEGY, AND AN APPEARANCE AT A CONTEST FOR JUDGING RABBITS WHERE HIS SON WOULD BE SHOWING HIS PETS. HE IS OBVIOUSLY FULLY INTO THE CAMPAIGN.

23. COMMENT

KOHL'S GRASP OF ISSUES AND HIS MANNER OF HANDLING THE DISCUSSION DEMONSTRATE THAT HE IS WELL ON THE WAY TO MOVING FROM A REGIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE TO A GENUINE NATIONAL PERSONALITY. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER HE CAN MAINTAIN HIMSELF AT THE TOP OF THE CDU/CSU PYRAMID IF HE LOSES THE UPCOMING ELECTION. EARLIER DEFEATED CHANCELLOR CANDIDATES HAVE RAPIDLY SLIPPED FROM POWER, BUT HE HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF YOUTH AND OF APPARENTLY SOLID SUPPORT FROM A LARGE CONSTITUENCY WITHIN THE CDU.

24. KOHL'S MAIN DIFFICULTY, AS THE POLLS SHOW, IS THAT HE HAS NEVER BEEN FULLY TESTED ON A NATIONAL ISSUE AND THAT HE HAS NOT YET BEEN FACED WITH A DEEP CRISIS. EVEN AT A TIME OF RELATIVE COMFORT AND SECURITY, THE GERMAN SUSPECTION OF THE FUTURE IS SO GREAT THAT THE ELECTORATE MAY NOT BE PREPARED TO TURN FOR LEADERSHIP TO A MAN NOT DEEPLY TESTED.

25. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION, WHICH WE BELIEVE TO BE STILL IN DOUBT, IT IS CLEAR THAT KOHL WILL BE AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN THE CDU AND IN NATIONAL POLITICS FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. THIS CONVERSATION ALSO REINFORCES OUR JUDGMENT THAT HE WILL ALSO REPRESENT THOSE ELEMENTS OF THE CDU WHOSE POLICIES AND INTERESTS ARE IN LINE WITH OUR OWN. WE THEREFORE REITERATE OUR RECOMMENDATION THAT APPOINTMENTS BE ARRANGED WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY WHEN KOHL VISITS THE UNITED STATES IN MAY..

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Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BONN01389
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760030-0883
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760120/aaaaaqmk.tel
Line Count: 648
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 12
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 MAR 2004 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <28 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

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EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE KOHL
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, GE, (KOHL, HELMUT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006